

Sermon Series - God Pleasers: 49 Days of Faith
Part 2 - "Taking Risks in Faith"
Pastor Dale Campfield - July 10th, 2011

Intro:

Matt 28:19 "Go and make disciples of all nations..."

ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve

We have 3 priorities – To love...which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration and connection groups. To grow...which is expressed in our Path to Discipleship. To serve...which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

Current Sermon Series: "God Pleasers" – 49 Days of Faith

Theme Verses: Hebrews 11:6 "Without faith, it is impossible to please God."

Sermon Topics

Expecting the Best, Taking Risks in Faith, Following God's Directions
How to Keep on Believing, Taking the Initiative. Stretching My Imagination
Persisting in Faith

How do you get God's approval? By being more good than bad? No. By keeping the Ten Commandments? No. By promising to be perfect? No. By being religious and going to church? No. The Bible says there's only one way to get God's approval. There's only one way to get God's smile on your life. In Hebrews 11:6 it says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." The only way you can get God's approval is by faith in Jesus Christ, His Son. You may be a great person but without faith it's impossible to please God. You may do all kinds of great things in your life but without faith it's impossible to please God.

Would you say that faith is a pretty important issue? Yes, it is. It is vital that you learn how to live by faith. That you strengthen your faith. If you want to make an IMPACT in life; being a God pleaser – you've got to have faith!

For forty-nine days, between July 3 and August 14 2011, we'll be in a seven week or 49-day series called "God Pleasers – 49 Days of Faith." In this series we're going to stretch your faith, we're going to challenge your faith, we're going to deepen your faith, we're going to strengthen your faith and you're going to see all kinds of amazing things happen in your life as your faith grows.

How do you get more faith? You say, "I'd like to get more faith. How do I get it?" The Bible tells us that faith comes by hearing the word of God. Faith comes from this book – this is faith-food – and the more you get into this book, God's word, the Bible – the more your faith will develop. So we've figured out a way in the next forty-nine days to deepen your faith and get you into the Word.

Matthew 9:29

"According to your faith it will be done to you."

Jesus is talking. This is one of my favorite verses in the Bible because God says it's your choice. You get to choose. "According to your faith it will be done to you." You get to choose how much God blesses your life. You get to choose how many answers you have to prayer. You get to choose how much God gets to use you in His plan for the world to make an IMPACT. How? "According to your faith it will be done to you." God says, "If you've got a lot of faith, we'll get a lot done in your life. If you've got a little faith, we'll get a little done in your life. If you've got no faith, you get nothing done in your life. 'According to your faith it will be done.'" Faith is the key that unlocks the door to heaven. If you want to be a God Pleaser – You've got to have FAITH!

It is very important that you grow, develop, you strengthen your faith.

Today's Sermon Title: "Taking Risks in Faith"

In terms of vision, there are three types of people in the world...

1. Under-takers. Under-taking People – Always looking back

The undertakers are always looking backwards. All that people ever talk about are the "good old days". They miss what is happening today because they are always looking back to yesterday. Decisions in this kind of person are based on what has worked in the past – if it was good enough for them then, it is good enough for us now.

While you can learn from the past, you can't live there. How do you look at your walk with Christ? Are you only remembering the GLORY DAYS of your life, business, ministry or do you feel the best years of your life are yet to come? When they rebuilt the temple after the captivity many people were upset because it was not as beautiful as before.

Haggai 2:3 Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing?

God reminded the people that he was with them and that His Spirit was still there. It is impossible to serve God yesterday. You cannot live off yesterday's bread. It does not matter how God has used you in the past – how will He use you in the future? A person or church that tries to walk looking backward is bound to fall – positive or negative.

2. Care-takers. Care-taking People – Always looking present

The care-taking person is always concerned with pressing issues. It is so busy and there are so many needs that the focus is on immediate issues. It seems to always be in maintenance mode, just trying to keep its head above the water. Decisions in this kind of life are based on immediate assets. The number one questions is always "do we have the money now to do this", "what will happen to me now?" etc. etc.

A pig ate his fill of acorns under an oak tree and then started to root around the tree. A crow remarked, "You should not do this. If you lay bare the roots, the tree will wither and die." "Let it die," said the pig. "Who cares as long as there are acorns?"

A care-taking person is realistic and comfortable. As long as life is good and things are going well, leave it alone. If it isn't broken then don't fix it. The problem is that they walk by sight and not faith.

3. Risk-takers. Risk-taking people – **Always looking forward** (to the future).

The risk taking person is always looking forward. They believe that the best is yet to come. They invest all they have today so that they can be all that God wants them to be tomorrow. Risk taking people seek to be cutting edge. They want to see how God is moving and to use all available resources for their lives and move forward.

One of the reasons that we don't take risks is fear of failure. However failure is just a part of life and is often a prerequisite to success. If you aren't failing then you aren't trying! I once heard George Verwer of OM speak about how that organization came to be. It was birthed out of failure. As one book says 'Failure is the Backdoor to Success'. If we want to as a church move forward with vision then we must accept the fact that there will be times in the future that we may fail along the way.

Jonas Salk attempted 200 unsuccessful vaccines for polio before he came up with one that worked. Somebody asked him one time, "How did it feel to fail 200 times trying to invent a vaccine for polio?" This was his response: "I never failed 200 times at anything in my life. My family taught me never to use that word. I simply discovered 200 ways how not to make a vaccine for polio."

A blind man's world is bounded by the limits of his touch; an ignorant man's world by the limits of his knowledge; a great man's world by the limits of his vision.

Examples of risk takers in the past...

Steve Erwin – The Crocodile Hunter

Evel Knievel – The motorcycle stunt driver that I met in Butte, Montana

Risks that I have taken in the past...

Illus: Sign, "Swim At Your Own Risk"...

I can remember being at the ocean, going out as far as I could, taking the risk. Why? For the adventure of it, and at times, because my girlfriend was watching! I wanted to impress her. And impress her I did; so I thought.

Illus: Skydiving – two times. The second time was scary, for the shoot wouldn't fill with air. I was streamlining down to the ground. But the risk was worth it!

Illus: As kids, walking across a log that was over a river, moss covered, dangerous! We risked it, to get to the other side. Dad led the way. He said, the risk is worth the reward; so we went for it. Slowly, but surely; to the other side. MOM wasn't happy – but we made it!

What causes ordinary people to take risks? What prompts people to gamble or engage in extreme sports such as skydiving, hang gliding, scuba diving, auto racing, rock climbing and whitewater kayaking? Psychologists have determined that it is more a personality trait rather than a behavior. Some people love to take risks; they thrive on the adrenaline rush and the feeling of escaping the ordinary. However, the majority of us prefer not to take risks we prefer the comfort of some security in our lives. We have committed ourselves to playing it safe. We hedge our bets, cover our tracks and dot every “I” and cross every “t”. From being over insured to eating low fat diets we try to minimize our risks as much as possible. In fact we do not mind taking risks as long as someone else is doing it. Jesus made it clear that following Him would be a risk. In fact He wants us to risk everything that we have to follow Him. He told the rich young ruler to give up all of his possessions to follow Him. In His parable of the talents, Jesus came down hard on the one talent man who refused to take a risk with his money. Jesus tells us to deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow Him. Following Christ is very risky business. Following Christ is not for the faint of heart, it is a life that will challenge us to the very core of our being. Today we are going to meet a woman by the name of Rahab who had a faith that moved her beyond her comfort zone and caused her to take risks.

Check out the example of Rahab... a prostitute. Hebrews 11:31. How on earth did she make it into the Hall of Fame/Faith? We talked about this Hall of Faith/Fame last week...

- Noah
- Moses
- Abraham
- And Rahab? (she got more press time than Samson, Gideon and David)

I. Rahab: a true risk taker.

A. Rahab is a very unlikely person to be listed among the great heroes of the faith.

1. The last thing we would expect to see in this list of great faith heroes is a prostitute.
2. In fact she is given more space than many of those great Bible heroes we grew up hearing about such as Samson, Gideon and David.
3. Certainly she knew the risk of helping the spies, worse, of concealing them. She was especially aware at the inn of the travelers’ talk about the approaching Israelites.
4. From tiny bits of information came enough faith to do one little thing. It was enough to show where her heart was. Faith without accompanying deeds is a useless thing. With them it is powerful.
5. Despite having lived a life of sin she took one great step of faith that made all the difference in her life.

B. Joshua who followed Moses as the leader of the Israelites was preparing to lead the people across the Jordan River to the Promised Land.

1. The spies proceeded immediately to Jericho. They found lodging in the house of a prostitute named Rahab. Perhaps they chose this house of ill repute because they thought that fewer questions might be asked of them there. Even so, the men were quickly spotted, recognized as Israelites, and reported to the king of the city.
2. Messengers were sent to Rahab ordering her to bring out the men who had entered her house. If Rahab was a sacred prostitute connected with one of the temples of the city that might explain why the authorities did not simply barge into the house and seize the strangers
3. Rahab was not too sure that the sanctuary of her house would be respected by the king’s men. She took the precaution of hiding her guests among stalks of flax on the flat roof of her house.

4. As it turned out, this was unnecessary. Rahab was able to convince the soldiers that the strangers had indeed come, but they had left about sundown when the city gate was closed.

C. The question is: What made Rahab such a hero?

1. The story about Rahab also teaches the value of obedience even if it is a small deed.

2. As it did in verse 27 the NIV adds the word “because” as an interpretation of an adverbial participle. The Greek text does not require “welcoming the spies” to be seen as the reason that she escaped death. It may as correctly be translated simply “after she welcomed the spies.”

3. Nothing is mentioned here about her saving her whole family, nor about the scarlet cord which was the means of this preservation. A small deed, done quickly with little advance notice, built on a general fear of dire consequences, was all she had available. It was all she needed.

4. By that one little deed she won for herself a place in the hall of fame of the faithful and in the lineage of the Messiah (**Matthew 1:5**).

Matthew 1:5

...A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the son of Isaac, the father of Jacob...Nahshon the father of Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab...

II. The things that Rahab risked are the very things many have risked for the cause of Christ and what God calls us to risk today.

A. We are called to risk our security.

1. As bad as her life as a prostitute must have been, it was her life and what she was used to.

2. So many people, who have had their lives destroyed by sinful lifestyles, refuse to accept Christ because they are comfortable with the familiar.

3. There was more in her heart. She had seen the frustrating impotence and degrading immorality of the gods around her. The stories coming from spies and travelers who kept an eye on the Israelites suggested that their God was a far different kind of god, a good god. She knew little more than his name. Perhaps she had heard some of the very fair laws of this god.

4. Rahab as she was hiding the spies probably reflected upon her life and pondered what it meant to put her trust in this God.

5. Without a doubt she knew that the inevitable future this act of faith would bring meant a tremendous change in her life.

6. After the soldiers left, Rahab went immediately to the roof to converse with her two guests. At the door of her home she had taken a stand. She had renounced her country and its gods. Now she enthusiastically embraced Yahweh as “God in heaven above and earth beneath.”

B. We may be called to risk our livelihood.

1. Deciding to follow the one true God meant a career change for Rahab. Besides what would she do for an income if all her clientele was dead and she was forced to live with a bunch of God-fearing people?

2. For some people coming to Christ may cause them to realize that their career is not consistent with the new life that God had called them to.

3. Besides Rahab another prime example of making a radical career move because of their new faith is Paul.

4. These concrete examples show that faith always looks to God. It seeks him out and aims to please him by doing whatever he says to do. God is trusted to be the designer, the builder and the host of a better city in a better country with better people.

C. We may be called to risk your life.

1. Rahab not only believed in the power of Yahweh, she must have also believed in his mercy.

For this reason she pled with the spies to enter into a covenant with her that she and her household might be spared in the day of attack. On condition that she tell no one about their mission the two spies pledged on their lives that Israel would deal “in covenant loyalty and faithfulness,” they would honor the covenant with Rahab.

2. If Rahab had been discovered hiding the spies, she surely would have been put to death.

3. Rahab’s belief in God was so strong that she feared God’s wrath on her city more than anything the people in the city could do to her. She was willing to risk her life and the lives of her family members.

4. Hanging a scarlet cord from her window must have seemed strange to those around her. But she did not care what others thought, she was willing to take that small risk to save the lives of those she loved.

D. Some final thoughts in regard to faith.

1. Faith gives strength to do what men in their weakness could not do. Faith knows that if its own strength fails, God will assist, even if he must do a miracle. When faith seizes the moment, it seizes God.

2. A believer draws others along in his train. He aims to save his family. He works to save the world. He leaves a clear voice when he has gone. God commends the faithful.

3. Though faith leads to new places, new privileges, new privations, it never leads away from God. Faith expects a better future full of God’s own rewards.

4. So what about you? Are you willing to risk losing your security to do what you believe God wants you to do? Are you willing to risk all that you have: your career, your ambitions, even your life for the cause of Christ?

5. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. (Matthew 19:29—NIV)

6. Risking these things or even entertaining such thoughts may seem to some as bordering on fanaticism. But that is only because they have not truly put their faith in the one who created them and risked all He had to come to the earth and die for them....

So.....Now what? What can we learn from this story and the fact that God has called us to be people of Faith; taking risks?

God can use anyone. He used a prostitute. He was willing and did save her out of her obedience to protect the spies. Rahab was a Kingdom Risk Taker!

5 Characteristics of Being a Kingdom Risk Taker

#1: Kingdom Risk Takers May Not be Popular

Rahab was popular to some people, due to her profession, but she was looked down by the rest of society. Some would look at her, being a prostitute, and say there is no way she should be in the Hall of Faith – Hebrews 11. With the sin in her life; no way! But think of it; God put her in there because of her FAITH! Not because of her profession; but her faith!

#2: Kingdom Risk Takers Go Against the Odds

Rahab lived in a community of laws. When the soldiers came to her house to seek out the spies, she had a decision to make. Will she obey God’s command or the command of the

soldiers? It was her decision. If you look at it, the odds were better for her, if she wanted to make it in her community, to give up the spies. So it would seem; at least in the natural. However, she saw it with different eyes. She had more fear of God than she did of man; thus she hid them. The odds in the natural would be that the soldiers would find out she lied and go in and kill her. But...as the story is told, she was the one spared of death and the soldiers killed instead. She went against the natural odds and won!

#3: Kingdom Risk Takers Serve a Higher Purpose

If you are going to take a risk in the natural, it's on your own. If you're going to risk it all to sky dive, it's on your own. A risk taken in the natural is basically gaining something in the natural state of life; the high, the adrenaline flow, etc. The risk of finances is for your gain. The risk of betting it all; is usually for your own gain. However, the risks we take for the Kingdom of God is for a higher purpose and will result in a greater reward.

You can store up treasures and trophies here on earth, or you can store them up in heaven by taking risks for the Kingdom of God.

Rahab risked it all for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

#4: Kingdom Risk Takers Benefit Great Rewards

As you can see in this story; Rahab, her parents, her brothers and sisters and their kids – all of them were saved from the death that ensued when the walls of Jericho came down. Everyone in the city was killed except them! AND...to top it all off; Rahab ended up being in the lineage of Jesus Christ Himself!

Matthew 1:5

...A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the son of Isaac, the father of Jacob...Nahshon the father of Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab...

#5: Kingdom Risk Takers Are "ALL IN"

They don't go half way. They don't reserve a little bit on the side "just in case this doesn't work out." No, there are ALL IN. They give it their all. They don't have one foot in the world and one in the church. They are not luke warm! They give it everything they have. When they take a risk, they risk it all.

We too must have this same mentality... "Lord, I'm all in." "I'll risk it all for you!"

Conclusion:

If you want to please God – you've got to be willing to take a risk; by faith. Through that faith, you will be blessed, God will be blessed, the Kingdom will be advance and you'll experience greater IMPACT than you've ever experienced before!

You watch... you wait... you'll see!